

Remarks/Arguments:

1. The Examiner has rejected claims 1-4 and 6-16 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Damsch (U.S. Patent No. 2,623,574) in view of Sobieralski (U.S. Patent No. 5,689,845). Additionally, claims 5 and 17 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Damsch and Sobieralski as applied to claims 1-4 and 6-16, and further in view of Kojic (U.S. patent No. 6,042,186).

2. Claims 1, 14 and 15 are amended herein. Paragraph [0018] has been amended herein as well. Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the amendments and/or remarks provided herein. No new matter has been added. Support for these amendments is clearly set forth in the drawings as originally filed.

3. In particular, Applicant has amended claims 1, 14 and 15 herein to point out key, novel, non-obvious features of the invention. Particularly, Applicant has included the following limitations to the independent claims herein:

- the fluid communication tube 3 being arcuately shaped
- tube 3 being connected to the respective mattresses 1, 2 in rigid, airtight fashion
- the tube 3 being connected to the mattresses 1,2 through respective sidewalls in the mattresses 1,2, which sidewalls lie in substantially the same plain during all inflated applications of the invention.

4. None of these features are taught or suggested by the art of record.

5. The air/equalization tube 47 of Sobieralski is used to add additonal inflatable cushion members 31 to base cushion 10 to expand the surface area of the overall device to accommodate a

larger patient. By definition, the air/equalization tube 47 is not *fixedly* attached to respective sidewalls of cushion 10 and 31 (for to do so would preclude re-use of base cushion 10 alone on a smaller patient), nor is air/equalization tube 47 connected to sidewalls of cushions 10 and 31 that lie in substantially the same plane but which sidewalls are capable of rotating through 180° relative to each other. The arcuate shape of tube 3, and the attachment thereof through sidewall portions adjacent hinge 5, facilitates the efficient communication of fluid between mattresses 1,2 and also facilitates efficient articulation of mattresses 1, 2 relative to each other with minimal stressing of tube 3 and its connections to mattresses 1, 2.

6. For the foregoing reasons, independent claims 1, 14 and 15 patentably define the invention over the prior art and are, therefore, allowable. Likewise, the claims depending therefrom are also allowable.

7. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone, facsimile or email if the Examiner believes that such a communication would advance the prosecution of the instant application. Please charge any necessary fees associated herewith, including extension of time fees if such fees are not paid by separate check, to the undersigned's deposit account no. 50-1111.

Respectfully submitted,



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